UCLA Faculty Association

News and opinion from Dan Mitchell since 2009

Tuesday, August 19, 2025

Coming Soon - If you are selected

From a notice posted on UCNet:

On August 25, 2025, randomly selected faculty, staff, and retirees (as well as their spouses or domestic partners) will begin receiving requests to participate in the annual medical plan satisfaction survey. The survey takes roughly 20 minutes to complete, and all responses are anonymous and confidential.

The following UC-sponsored Medicare, non-Medicare, and Behavioral Health plans will be included:

- CORE
- Kaiser Permanente
- Kaiser Permanente Senior Advantage
- Optum (for Kaiser members)
- UC Blue & Gold HMO
- UC Care
- UC Health Savings Plan
- UC High Option Supplement to Medicare
- UC Medicare PPO
- UC Medicare Choice

Completing your survey

Members of Commercial and Medicare plans who are selected to participate will receive surveys via email if they have a work email on file. The email (from UC@cssresearch.org) will include a link to the survey, along with a personal code to enter on the survey website. Members who are selected to participate but do not have an email address on file will receive a survey package through postal mail...

Members who have utilized behavioral health or substance abuse services and are selected to participate will receive a survey package by mail only. Medicare members who are selected to participate will have the option to complete the survey by email or mail.

===

Source: https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/employee-news/annual-medical-plan-satisfaction-surveys-launching-in-august-2025/.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments:

Labels: health care, UC, uc retirement

Straws in the Wind - Part 75

From the Independent Florida Alligator: *After almost 20 years of service, the University of Florida shut down its Office of Sustainability... UF spokesperson Cynthia Roldán Hernández wrote in an email statement university leadership decided to "sunset the Office of Sustainability and its functions" effective Aug. 4. The decision to shut down the office is part of a university-wide effort to identify new efficiencies, eliminate duplicative efforts and cut costs, she wrote...*

Three employees were terminated as a result of the office's closure, two of whom declined an interview. One did not respond in time for publication. The statement read UF has made great strides in adopting efficiency principles, environmental stewardship and economic viability through the Office of Sustainability, and those principles are now embedded into UF's business practices. The office's mission was to make UF a sustainability model by promoting ecological restoration, economic development and environmental justice, according to its site. It offered internship positions, and the site said collaboration is one of its top priorities.

...At a June 5 UF Board of Trustees meeting, chair Mori Hosseini said he asked Chief Financial Officer Nick Kozlov to have all UF departments and deans "look at a 5% net decline." ...

Full story at https://www.alligator.org/article/2025/08/uf-shuts-down-office-of-sustainability.

From Inside Higher Ed: *Texas Republicans, like those in other red states in recent years, have overhauled aspects of public higher education in ways that have raised concerns about the future of academic freedom for faculty and institutional autonomy for colleges and universities. They've banned diversity, equity and inclusion efforts; reduced the faculty's role in university decision-making; and mandated curriculum reviews, among other changes. But Senate Bill 37, which Gov. Greg Abbott signed into law in June, added something the other states' laws lack: It*

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- Stand up for values in the face of Trump's $300 million cut to UCLA scholars
- Faculty leaders comment on UCB Chancellor Lyon's appearance before House Committee on Education and the Workforce
- CUCFA Opposes AB 715
- Pause Trellix and Form a Working Group to Explore Cybersecurity Solutions

Remaking the University

- The coalition of UC unions condemns Trump's attacks on the University of California and the Californian economy - 8/26/2025
- Liner Note 37. Chicago's Gift to Trump - 8/24/2025
- Liner Note 36. UCLA in the Extortion Machine - 8/10/2025

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- California Faculty Association (NEA)
- UC-AFT

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created an ombudsman position tasked with ensuring institutions follow SB 37 and the earlier DEI ban, which took effect in 2024...

The governor gets to choose the ombudsman, and the state Senate can approve or deny the pick. After that, the governor can unilaterally decide to fire this new overseer if he's not pleased. This means Abbott, a Republican who has criticized professors for pushing "woke agendas," has ultimate authority over this new watchdog. Faculty and academic freedom groups say they're concerned about politicization of this new position—which, under the law, can recommend that state lawmakers cut off a university's ability to spend state funds until it complies...

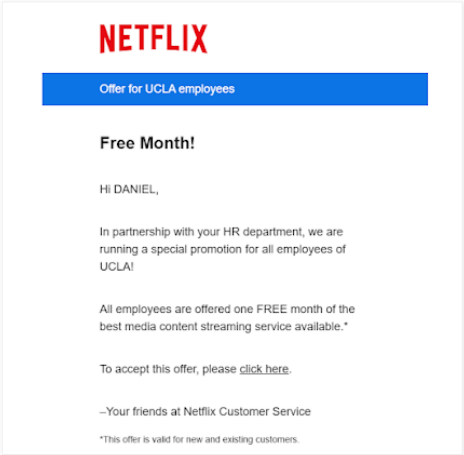
Full story at https://www.insidehighered.com/news/governance/state-oversight/2025/08/11/texas-lawmakers-create-overseer-make-colleges-follow.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:20 AM No comments:

Labels: diversity, Texas A and M, Texas State U, U of Florida, U of Texas

Monday, August 18, 2025

Of course, you deleted this...


NETFLIX

Offer for UCLA employees

Free Month!

Hi DANIEL,

In partnership with your HR department, we are running a special promotion for all employees of UCLA!

All employees are offered one FREE month of the best media content streaming service available.*

To accept this offer, please click here.

--Your friends at Netflix Customer Service

*This offer is valid for new and existing customers.

...Particularly after you noticed that it came from

university...@metflix.us (Metflix?)

Posted by California Policy Issues at 8:25 AM No comments:

Labels: email fraud

Online Courses and Outside Vendors

The California State Auditor looked at UC's policy of engaging outside vendors in connection with online course offerings. As a result, UC has various policies under review. The policies would apply to any educational offering, whether undergraduate, graduate, or extension.

Perhaps the most salient aspect of the policies is the requirement for transparency to students. If a course is offered, is the instructor an actual UC employee or someone hired by the vendor? The latter isn't prohibited but it must be disclosed so that the student knows in advance who is giving the course.

When an outside vendor is involved, there has to be a course evaluation process meeting specified criteria.

Finally, there can't be a compensation plan for the vendor keyed to the number of students enrolled.

Comments on the proposed standards are due by Nov. 12. Details at:

https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/_files/underreview/systemwide-senate-review-presidential-policy-for-uc-use-of-opms.pdf.

Note: Yours truly was unable to find the Auditor's report that led to this policy on the Auditor's website. There is no citation of any specific Auditor's report at the link above. It is not clear why there is no citation.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments:

Labels: online education, UC

Straws in the Wind - Part 74

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Contributors

- California Policy Issues
- Toby Higbie
- UCLA Faculty Association

From the NY Times: *A new lawsuit filed on [August 6] by a free speech watchdog takes aim at the key legal foundations that the Trump administration has relied on to arrest and attempt to deport foreign students over their criticism of the Israeli government. The challenge, filed in California, goes further than other lawsuits that have targeted the student arrests. The new suit focuses on a section of immigration law that allows the secretary of state to determine that a noncitizen poses a threat to the country's foreign policy and can be removed from the country for that reason. It argues that it is unconstitutional to invoke the provisions for speech and other activities protected by the First Amendment.*

Lawyers from the free speech group, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, brought the lawsuit on behalf of the student newspaper at Stanford University, The Stanford Daily, arguing that several of its staff members have been forced to self-censor or quit the paper out of fear that the government could retaliate for what it publishes...

Full story at https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/06/us/politics/stanford-lawsuit-student-activist-deportations.html.

From Inside Higher Ed: *...Students for Fair Admissions, the organization that successfully fought to end race-conscious admissions practices, settled with two military academies that were exempted from the 2023 Supreme Court ruling that ended affirmative action, The New York Times reported. The Supreme Court ruled two years ago that military academies could continue to practice race-conscious admissions due to "potentially distinct interests" at such institutions. SFFA then sued, arguing such practices should be struck down. But on Monday, SFFA dropped its lawsuits against the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the United States Air Force Academy.*

As part of the agreement, the Department of Defense, which oversees military service academies, will no longer consider race and ethnicity in admissions, according to settlement details, which emphasize recruiting and promoting individuals based on merit alone. That settlement also backed away from the notion that it has an interest in a diverse office corps...

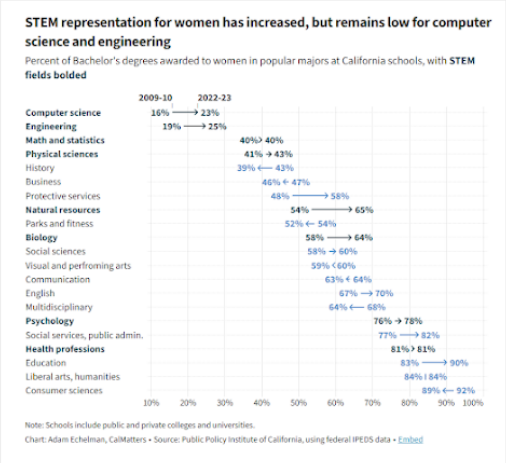
Full story at https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2025/08/13/anti-affirmative-action-group-settles-military-academies.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:20 AM No comments:

Labels: Air Force Academy, diversity, politics, Stanford, West Point

Sunday, August 17, 2025

Changing STEM


STEM representation for women has increased, but remains low for computer science and engineering
Percent of Bachelor's degrees awarded to women in popular majors at California schools, with STEM fields bolded
2009-10
2022-23
Computer science 16% → 23%
Engineering 19% → 25%
Math and statistics 40% → 40%
Physical sciences 41% → 43%
History 39% ← 43%
Business 46% ← 47%
Protective services 48% → 58%
Natural resources 54% → 65%
Parks and fitness 52% ← 54%
Biology 58% → 64%
Social sciences 58% → 60%
Visual and perfroming arts 59% ‹ 60%
Communication 63% ‹ 64%
English 67% → 70%
Multidisciplinary 64% ← 68%
Psychology 76% → 78%
Social services, public admin. 77% → 82%
Health professions 81% › 81%
Education 83% → 90%
Liberal arts, humanities 84% | 84%
Consumer sciences 89% ← 92%
10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
Note: Schools include public and private colleges and universities.
Chart: Adam Echelman, CalMatters • Source: Public Policy Institute of California, using federal IPEDS data • Embed

CalMatters carries an article on efforts to encourage more women in California to go into STEM fields. Generally, there has been movement in that direction as the chart above indicates. See:

https://calmatters.org/education/higher-education/2025/08/women-in-stem-california/.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 9:16 AM No comments:

Labels: diversity

Something Different

If current events are troubling, here is something in the news that is different. From NPR:

UCLA Prof. Jewitt

ARI SHAPIRO, HOST:

A remarkable object is rocketing through our solar system. It's a comet known as 3I/ATLAS. NASA caught a sharp image of it, which is striking because astronomer David Jewitt says that's like glimpsing a rifle bullet for a thousandth of a second. Jewitt is lead author of a forthcoming paper about the object in the Astrophysical Journal Letters, and he's here to share his team's finding with us. Welcome.

UCLA Prof. DAVID JEWITT: Hello.

SHAPIRO: *This is only the third interstellar object observed entering our solar system. But we don't know where in the universe it came from. How do you know for sure that it came from outside the solar system?*

JEWITT: *The key signature is that it's traveling really, really fast relative to the sun. So it's going so fast that the gravity of the sun cannot hold onto it. It came in at about 40 miles per second,*

and that's just way too fast for the sun's gravity to be able to hold it back.

SHAPIRO: *And that kind of points to the challenge of capturing it. How extraordinary is it to actually have an image of something going at that speed?*

JEWITT: *Well, we thought objects like this might be out there, for decades, maybe centuries. But we didn't see anything like that until the first one - the famous one - 'Oumuamua in 2017. It was very exciting because it's literally the tip of the iceberg. So this is the start of the study of a totally new population of bodies that we can look at with our telescope. So it's very exciting for that reason.*

SHAPIRO: *Yeah. It's kind of amazing that astronomers have always believed these things are out there, but it's only in the last decade that images of them have been caught - three of them. So how does this expand the potential for scientific discovery?*

JEWITT: *Well, it just reveals the population for the first time. So we can begin to try to measure them and try to understand them. And we have all these questions that we'd like to answer about them - not just where are they from, but how many of them are there? We think there's probably a huge number of them. How big are they? And, you know, the first two look completely different from each other. So the first one - 'Oumuamua - looked like basically a rock, an asteroid with no sign of any material coming out of it. Second one - Borisov - looked just like a regular comet in the solar system. So I think many people, including me, were wondering, well, what's the third one going to be like? And are they...*

SHAPIRO: *And what's it like? What's this third one like?*

JEWITT: *It's actually much more like the second one than the first one. So it has ice in the nucleus, and the ice gets warmed by the sun, and it turns into a gas. The gas streams away from the nucleus, and it blows out bits of dust, and then the bits of dust reflect sunlight and we see it as kind of a cloud or a coma surrounding the object. So it's an ice-containing body. It looks like a comet, so we think it is a comet. But it's a comet that doesn't come from our solar system. It comes from somebody else's planetary system somewhere else in the Milky Way, some probably very long time ago...*

Full interview at https://www.npr.org/2025/08/12/nx-s1-5500247/the-solar-systems-third-interstellar-visitor-3i-atlas-is-zooming-by-at-130-000-mph.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments:

Labels: UCLA

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